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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 002070

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/17/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [ASEC](#) [ID](#)  
SUBJECT: PAPUAN SEPARATIST LEADER KELLY KWALIK REPORTED  
KILLED IN SHOOTOUT WITH POLICE

REF: JAKARTA 1561 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Dep/Pol/C Daniel A. Rochman, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Indonesian police reportedly killed well-known Papuan separatist leader Kelly Kwalik during a December 16 shootout. Kwalik is widely believed to have been involved in a series of shootings that targeted the Papua operations of U.S. mining company Freeport-McMoRan, including a 2002 attack that killed two Americans. An Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program (ATA) trained Detachment 88 team conducted the raid on the house in Timika. Some Papuans have peacefully protested the police action and maintained that Kwalik is innocent. While Kwalik's death will be a blow to separatist groups, an unknown number of his associates remain at large, and further attacks are possible. END SUMMARY.

#### SHOOTOUT DURING EARLY MORNING RAID

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Indonesian National Police (INP) appear to have killed Kelly Kwalik, a key leader of the Free Papua Movement (OPM), during a raid in the early morning of December 16. ATA-trained Detachment 88 and the INP's Mobile Brigade led the operation near Timika, a town on the southern coast of Indonesia's Papua province. (Note: Papua is the site of a low-level separatist insurgency, fueled by long-standing political and economic grievances among indigenous people. Efforts to address these grievances through a regional autonomy arrangement has been slow to produce results.) Police reportedly fired when Kwalik shot at them as they approached a house where he was staying. According to sources, Kwalik sustained gunshot wounds to the chest and leg and died several hours later in a clinic operated by Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold, which runs a large mine in the area.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Police officials cautioned that they could not definitively confirm Kwalik's identity until after conducting DNA and other forensic tests. Our contacts in the Timika area all believe that Kwalik was killed in the raid. Police also took five other people into custody during the raid, including a ten-year old boy. They remain in custody in Timika where police are questioning them. The police have not yet charged any of those detained nor provided any details about them.

#### KWALIK SUSPECTED IN NUMEROUS INCIDENTS

[1](#)4. (S) The INP believes Kwalik played a leadership role in a series of shooting attacks on Freeport that began July 11 (see reftel). The series of sixteen attacks killed one Australian and two Indonesians and left around 30 Indonesians wounded. Brigadier General Tito Karnavian, commander of

Detachment 88, told us that police had established Kwalik's involvement in the attacks through monitoring his mobile phone communications. Papuan separatists frequently criticize Freeport and claim that the company does not provide any benefits to the Papuan people. Prior to this series of shootings, armed attacks on the company's operations were rare.

¶5. (C) Kwalik also admitted involvement in a 2002 shooting near Timika that killed two Americans and one Indonesian during an interview with the FBI. Several other perpetrators of that incident have been tried and remain in prison in Indonesia. However, Kwalik managed to elude capture and has remained at large in the Timika area.

#### TENSE REACTION IN TIMIKA

¶6. (C) Kwalik's death has raised tensions in the Timika area. Several prominent Papuan traditional leaders and members of the Papuan People's Council (MRP) have asserted that Kwalik was not involved in the recent shootings. Instead, they point to an alleged feud between the police and military--a popular but unsubstantiated view among Papuans. Throughout the day on Thursday, December 17, between 200 and 300 people held a peaceful protest in front of the local legislative building in Timika. Protest organizers maintained that Kwalik was innocent and criticized the police action. While the situation in Timika remains tense, there have been no incidents of violence. Civil society contacts in Timika told us that the police appear to be managing the situation well and acting with restraint.

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#### THREATS REMAIN

¶7. (C) Kwalik's death will have some impact on the OPM's operational abilities but it does not eliminate the threat the group poses. The OPM is a highly fractious and decentralized organization and other leaders remain at large across the province. While Kwalik was a well-known and charismatic figure, it remains unclear that he had much direct operational control over the small bands of OPM fighters in jungles around Timika. Moreover, we have no confirmation that the police have captured the individuals who actually carried out the attacks. Further attacks, either on Freeport or the Indonesian security forces, thus remain a possibility.

HUME